

# *Sketch*

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## The Western Desert

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clapped stickily. Above this rumble the high soprano of excited children's voices piped over men's heavy guffaws and the steady clacking of women's tongues.

**L**IGHTS down! Silence. A baby wailed thinly. Silence again. The show was on! It was "Ten Nights in a Bar Room." The dark heads and shoulders rising out of the seats in front leaned ahead, the better to see and hear.

At the end of act one, a great sigh heaved out of the crowd with the let-down of between-act buffoonery.

The audience tensed again, as the play resumed. Women recognized the too familiar symbol of poverty on the stage back-drop, where fallen plaster exposed bone-white ribs of lath surrounded with the grimy skin of old brown wall-paper.

Throaty coughs and sniffles came, unashamed, in the last scene when the salvaged derelict of a husband, reformed, forgiven, and decently clad, tenderly embraced his patient wife. It was over too soon!

"Billy Bryant's floating palace'll be here agin next year, folks."

Jarred back into themselves, the crowd flowed into the aisles and trickled silently down the gang plank.

## The Western Desert

By Alice Hughes, '36

**G**REEN and grey cactus on brown sand,  
White sand dazzling by day,  
And at evening  
Fading into faint red and pale yellow.  
Scattered haciendas,  
Havens of rest and water.  
Lone cowboys by night  
Riding in the cool breeze  
Among grotesque shadows of the desert,  
Under the starlit sky,  
Hunting lost cattle in the sage brush.